

The Library Assistant:

The Official Organ of the Library Assistants' Association.

No. 84.

DECEMBER, 1904.

Published Monthly

THE DECEMBER MEETING.

The next meeting of the present session will be held by kind invitation of Mr. Charles Welch, F.S.A., at the Guildhall Library, on Wednesday, December 14th, at 7.30 p.m., when Mr. Welch will give "A Talk on Engraving and Engravers as illustrated by the Willshire Bequest in the Guildhall Library." Members are expected to be present; friends are cordially invited.

A vacancy on the Committee (Non-London) will be filled at this meeting.

The measure of the interest of London and district library assistants in the higher branches of their calling will not be difficult to gauge after the meeting announced above takes place. We are ready to admit that no part of our profession presents so many complications, so many apparently dry-as-dust problems as does bibliography; and, again, we acknowledge that in the course of ordinary municipal librarianship we are rarely called upon to judge of the historical value of engraving. Yet a wise man once said that if a man is not too good for his berth he is certainly not good enough for it, and it behoves us to seize an opportunity so excellent to prove our desire to be ready for the emergencies which, if rare, are always possible in our profession. And few who have really taken up this study have found it other than interesting in the highest degree.

Mr. Welch has proved himself again and again deeply interested in the work of our Association, and many of us recall with pleasure the evenings we have spent with him. Hence we write above that members are "expected" to be present; but these meetings are not entirely for members; they are for library assistants everywhere. The apathy amongst assistants is as disheartening as it is proverbial. It is high time to awake out of this sleep; and one sign of this awakening will be a large gathering to enjoy an evening which cannot fail to be entertaining and instructive. Our colleagues who attended Mr. Pollard's lectures, and are attending those of Mr. Roberts, are especially invited.

The January Meeting of the Association will be held at Poplar Public Library on January 11th, at 8 p.m., when Mr. Harry Rowlatt, chief librarian, by whose invitation we shall meet, will read a paper on "Library Accounts."

BOOK-SELECTION.

BY ERNEST A. SAVAGE.

When I was asked to deliver this paper it occurred to me that a few words on the subject of book-selection would be perhaps welcome to you—not because it was unhackneyed, but because something still remained to be said about a duty, which, all things being considered, is the most onerous librarians are called upon to fulfil. After selection, description and exposition of books are of the first importance. But selection is the beginning of description. It is the beginning and the end of the librarian's critical function. To no small extent it should determine the reading of a community.

Let us consider first the method of performing a duty so important. I will say nothing about the making of a collection of books *de novo*, because few of us in these latter days are called on to form new libraries; but I will assume that we are selecting books to augment a collection already in existence. You will at once agree with me that no librarian can select books properly unless his library is classified with some degree of thoroughness. One may argue that the catalogue will show up the deficiencies of a collection. If the catalogue be classified, this is partly true, but not wholly so since the use of as many headings in the catalogue as in the classification is unusual and undesirable. Therefore our classed catalogue, even supposing it to be always up-to-date, does not facilitate the minute supervision possible with a classified stock. With a dictionary catalogue and an unclassified collection, the librarian who wishes to reinforce his collection is in a sad position indeed. He cannot review his troops: his brigades, and regiments, and squadrons are commingled as in a retreating army; and he longs for the rally and the roll-call which will mercilessly show him the gaps and the weaknesses in the units of his force.

So classification is the first guide to the librarian; it shows up deficiencies—and deficiencies ought to be supplied first. But having supplied these, we need to keep the library "alive" by the steady inflow of modern books. No part of the library should be allowed to become quite out of date. Even a small and a poor library can freshen up (say) the electricity section by the addition of at least two recent works a year.

Our outlook must be wide, and as we look around, a guide should be beside us to see that we miss nothing. Here the guide must be the classification, which may be Adjustable, or Cutter, or Dewey, or our own improvement on any of these. But suppose we are using the Dewey Tables.

Omitting "General Works," the main classes of Dewey are Philosophy, Religion, Sociology, Science, Useful Arts, Fine Arts, Literature, History (including Biography and Description). The literary papers, such as the *Athenaeum*, the *Bookman* and the *Literary World*, do not thoroughly survey the whole of this field, and by trusting solely to their guidance, we are liable to make our literature section unduly strong and our fine art, science and history sections much weaker than they ought to be. To avoid this danger one will find it advisable to read the reviews in a larger and more varied selection of papers. For philosophical, religious, and sociological books we might watch the *Monist*, the *Philosophical Review*, *Mind*, the *Guardian*, the *British Weekly*; for scientific books we may study the

Scientific American and *Nature*: for useful arts the *Builder*, the *Electrician*, the *Engineer*, and the *Journal of Decorative Art*: for fine arts, the *Studio*: for literature, the *Athenaeum*: for history and description, the *English Historical Review* and the *Geographical Journal*. Don't go away with the idea that I am attempting to put forward an ideal list of papers; each of you will have his own opinions and preferences. I simply wish to explain clearly one method of making our survey of the literary field as wide and as fair as we possibly can.

In the reviews we can place little faith. Publishers' announcements, log-rolling, and incompetence have depreciated the face value of current criticism. Nevertheless to the librarian of ordinary shrewdness they are of service.

When a person is addressing us in the course of conversation, whilst paying heed to the words which pass his lips, we also translate his glances, his involuntary movements and gestures, so that in a sense we are able to see behind his face. We must get behind the face value of reviews. This is not difficult, because since few reviewers really deceive themselves in critical matters, although they may deliberately deceive the public, they are indefinite, quite without facts and arguments when praising books against their will and in spite of their opinions. Your salesman of indifferent honesty will describe what he wants to sell as excellent, the best article in the market, splendid value for the money. But your quite honest salesman is prepared with categorical reasons why such article is the best. The honest reviewer—whose reviews we occasionally find—will tell you reason for reason, fact for fact, why the book is good. The incompetent reviewer, like his dishonest confrère, is vapid, windy, not fond of facts—or (I should say) afraid of facts. The worst of it is we can scarce tell whether a reviewer is dishonest or incompetent—their vapouring is so much alike; and it therefore happens that sometimes an incompetent reviewer loses us a good book by his ineptitude.

But it is fairly safe to distrust what is not explicit and to the point. A reason always exists for vagueness, and the reason usually is the reviewer's unexpressed opinion of the unworthiness of the book he is reviewing.

Reviews, then, if read in the light of common sense, have a value in book selection, simply because we have nothing to take their place.* They should be studied week by week or month by month. The work will not take so much time as one would expect, because with practice one learns to comprehend the gist of a review, if not in a glance, in a very brief and cursory survey. Breadth of view is still further widened by procuring the help of assistants to do the work; the librarian, whilst so improving the character of his selection, affords an opportunity of self training to those under him.

Good reasons may be found for marking selections in various ways. For example, against the review of a book which is absolutely necessary to the library, we might put one sort of mark, say, a circle with a cross in it; against the review of a very desirable work, we could put a cross only; against the review of a book which we ought to buy if the money is available, put simply a circle. An assistant can then copy on to slips a description of each book so selected, transcribing carefully the marks

*In annotation and description of books it is preferable to rely on our own inspection of a book, and avoid reviews of it entirely.

showing the degrees of approval. We are bound to collect many more suggestions than we require, and the marks are of value inasmuch as they enable the selector to delete doubtful books at the proper time.

This first list of books is comparable to the short list of candidates for an appointment; some must be taken, the others politely thanked for the great kindness in attending—I mean they must be destroyed. The selections from this short list should be made with system. Suppose at this moment the proportional representation of the classes in the library is settled, and suppose that the classification of the library shows that the proportion really exists; then clearly the proportion must be maintained. To start fair with 20 per cent. fiction, 10 per cent. history, and so on, if the stock is thereafter added to loosely and inconsiderately, is quite useless. But at the same time it is unwise to make each individual list of suggested additions strictly according to your proportion, because books are not published in anything like that proportion at regular intervals throughout the year. I would take the whole year round. Decide to increase the stock strictly according to the proportion during the year. Then keep a careful account of the additions to each class. Perhaps in the first list of that year's suggestions the addition to History will exceed the proportion, but later on in the year a chance may occur to offset this preponderance. During the summer the lists will contain a number of fiction below the proportion previously fixed, but with the autumn publishing season this will be rectified.

The method of submitting the suggestions to the Committee is so simple as not to need much explanation. All the librarian has to do is to make a list of the books he has selected up to the amount of money at the Committee's disposal; and to be prepared with reasons why he proposes to purchase them. One word of warning may be uttered. Never go to a Committee with a larger list than they can afford, leaving them to strike out the surplus. This is shirking responsibility. The librarian should always be clear as to what he wants, and why he wants it.

I will not keep you longer over this part of my paper. Let me recapitulate the points of method—which after all are quite commonplace. They are: the importance of classification in selection, the advisability of obtaining breadth of view by reading reviews in journals covering the whole ground of your classification; the necessity of discrimination in reading reviews; the utility of signifying degrees of approval; and the necessity of finally selecting with due regard to the proportionate representation of literature before decided upon.

I turn with some diffidence to argument, with which you will perhaps not wholly agree. On the proportion to be observed between classes I have little to say; the only important point is the proportion of fiction as compared with that of other classes. Mr. Barrett, in a paper on the selection of books for "Branch Libraries," gives the following percentage of fiction in various libraries: Bristol, 33 per cent.; Manchester, 40 per cent.; Edinburgh, 43 per cent.; Birmingham, 47 per cent. I would be inclined to reduce the proportion of fiction in libraries to 20 or 15 per cent.

If we ask ourselves why a large proportion of fiction is now stocked, we get the answer that even that proportion, large as it may seem, is less than our readers demand. Surely, we are told, the people who pay the piper should call the tune. Assuming for the moment that the people who pay should call the tune, why, when our public libraries are issuing 70 per

cent. or 80 per cent. fiction, do we not fix our proportion of this class of work at 70 or 80 per cent.? On this reasoning even Birmingham's proportion is at least 23 per cent. too low. The fact is public libraries simply dare not supply the proportion of fiction demanded by users, because, did they do so, they would be howled down inside twelve months. Of necessity, therefore, we provide only 30 to 40 per cent. fiction; we draw the line somewhere, and, since we cannot hope to meet the fiction demand, why do we not draw the line a little nearer the educational field of our work? Why should we be inadequate both on the recreative side and on the educational side?

The most foolish arguments ever used by those young men of the Press who understand our work so much better than ourselves, and, alas! even by some of our fellow-workers, is the maxim which has led us far from the work libraries were established to do. To say that public library readers are entitled to determine what books shall be in the library is utterly absurd. I see that the *Library Assistant* this month has done a Novocastrian scribe the honour of reprinting some inane remarks which are based upon this fallacious maxim of the piper and his tune. For the maxim *is* fallacious. As a rule, from ten to twelve per cent. only of the population of a town use the Public Library, which the whole community supports, towards which every householder in the town contributes something. Is this ten or twelve per cent. entitled—or for the matter of that, is fifty per cent. of the population entitled to demand what reading the whole shall provide? A very large majority of the people of a town either do not read or have libraries of their own, or subscribe to circulating libraries. They support or tolerate the library because they believe it to be an educational agency for the working and lower middle classes. So we get four kinds of ratepayers (or householders, for it comes to the same thing): the illiterate, who cannot read; business men, who cannot find time to read; well-to-do people, who get their reading elsewhere; and lastly the users of the public library. The illiterate can be left out of account; but together the business people who do not use the public library and the people who get their books elsewhere, make up a public opinion of some influence and power, and they tolerate the library on the ground of its educational utility. I am safe in saying they tolerate it solely on this ground. And since these people who look on and pay are the majority, they must be considered in the management of the library just as much as those who use it. So that whenever the shibboleth about the piper and his tune is raised we must think on them, reply by still further restricting our recreative, and increasing our educational work. The fact that the library may not be so popular is no concern of yours if it can be shown with reason that the work done is wholly good.

But not only am I inclined to advocate the reduction of the proportion of fiction at present stocked. I am inclined to limit the variety of fiction by buying only the very best books, and making up the proportion we have decided upon with additional copies. For I hold it to be preferable to issue ten copies of a good novel than ten individual second-rate novels. We are all heartily tired of the fiction question, but I make no apology for raising it because it will continue to be the paramount question with us until it is solved. A question of such moment cannot be burked or excused. I will ask you to look at it in this light: as I said, 10 or 12 per cent. of the people are using libraries; 60 to 80 per cent. of the books taken out by them are novels; that is to say, about 3 per cent. of the public only are making the best use of an institution supported by the whole body of

ratepayers. I ask you seriously, do you think the ratepayers will tolerate this state of affairs for ever?

The remarks I have passed with regard to fiction are, in my opinion, applicable to all classes of non-fiction. The criterion in book selection is quality. What is now often spent on a variety of books of inferior quality should be spent on duplicating or triplicating what is really and truly good. The second criterion of selection should be use. It will immediately occur to you that in non-fiction especially quality and popularity do not go together. But although they do not go all the way together, they go some part of the way, and so far we must accompany them. The number of books of both high quality and popularity is increasing rapidly. This we might expect, considering the keen competition in authorship and publishing to-day. In the case of non-fiction I would look upon it as the law of the Medes and Persians that no book should be obtained which only appealed to the few when other books which appeal to the many still remain unbought. I will consider one particular instance. Imagine a library of moderate size, with a limited income. Are we to buy for that library the Cambridge Natural History, or the works of Kearton, Furneaux, Oliver Pike, Shephard-Walwyn, and like authors? I would vote for the latter more popular books. The Cambridge Natural History is a great work, but it appeals to a few, whereas the other books I have mentioned are popular with naturalists and the general public alike; they are always out; they continually impose a restraint on that fiction percentage, which is eternally struggling to rise. I am afraid there is a craze nowadays for buying big and expensive works, simply for the benefit of a few readers who have the time and the leisure to come to the reference library, whilst money cannot be found to purchase in sufficient quantities good, cheap and popular non-fiction books.

To show you more clearly what I regard as the principles of book selection for public libraries I will refer to some of our autumn publications. To begin with fiction I would not select Crockett's "Loves of Miss Anne," or Hall Caine's "Prodigal Son," or Arnold Bennett's "Teresa of Watling Street," or Guy Boothby's "Desperate Conspiracy," or Max Nordau's "Morganatic," or Baring-Gould's "Book of Ghosts." But I would buy several copies of Kipling's "Traffics and Discoveries," several copies of Weyman's "Abbess of Vlaye," several copies of Mason's "The Truants," Merriman's "Last Hope," Conrad's "Nostromo," simply because besides being in great demand they are well written and some of the best work published. In biography I would suggest the life of Justice Hawkins and Arminius Vambery's Story, but not the life of Lord Coleridge. In other classes I would take two copies of Crockett's "Raiderland," two copies of Maxwell's "Log of the Griffin," two copies of "Swedish Life in Town and Country," and two copies of Sven Hedin's "Adventure in Thibet," two copies of Bullen's new book, and two copies of Kingsland's "Book of Indoor and Outdoor Games," rather than Nassau's "Fetichism in West Africa," Rose's "Napoleonic Studies," Aker's "History of South America," Falkner's "Illustrations of Irish History," Morel's "King Leopold's Rule in Africa," valuable as these books may appear.

It seems to me that we ought to buy the good, popular books first and try to supply them to the limit of the demand. When a suggestion goes before a committee it is practically a pledge, firstly that the book is of high quality, secondly that it is the book on that subject or in that class which will be most widely read. To buy a heavy scientific book simply

because it is sound workmanship which ought to be encouraged is not what we are called upon to do. By restricting our selections to books which are at once high in quality and likely to be read and well read, we make a library "live" in the best sense, because with several copies of a good work on our shelves we are better equipped to meet the popular demand. With our present limited income we can afford to disregard the casual inquiries for heavy or expensive tomes. But although we should be better equipped to meet what is called the popular demand our stock should not include vapid, slovenly, or incompetent works, however popular they may be, for I believe we can find plenty of readers with superior tastes. Every sensational or ill-written novel, or slovenly book of any kind added to the library is a reflection on the intelligence of the community we serve.

A library authority can bring together just those kind of readers it is pleased to cater for. Some library authorities—not many, I believe—deliberately pander to low tastes. Other library authorities—a very large number—oscillate between their interests and their inclinations, between their fear of spoiling the pleasures of their clients and arousing the displeasure of the ratepayers. The nobler and the wiser policy is to meet only those needs which may be met justifiably; to build up a library, which, whatever it may lack in variety, is efficient inasmuch as it can afford to supply, almost up to the limit of the demand, the books which are educational and popular in the highest and best sense.

DISCUSSION.

The paper was followed by a vigorous discussion, maintained by Messrs. Chambers, Coltman, Coutts, Hatcher, Hogg, Rees, Shawcross, and Sureties. In moving a vote of thanks to Mr. Savage, Mr. Sayers said it was time we ceased apologising for our existence. Libraries were not foisted upon the public, and to say that a certain section of the community merely tolerated them was an out-of-date phrase. Fiction, as the chosen form of literary expression of the age, should be well-represented; and it should not be forgotten that there was a recreative value in libraries which was of the utmost consequence. In his reply, Mr. Savage said that every effort should be made to develop the educational work of libraries, for unless this was done he was persuaded that in a time of national stress, such as a great war in which this country was engaged, our public libraries would be among the first institutions to suffer.

There is ample food for thought in Mr. Savage's words, which are curiously borne out by what happened during the Franco-Prussian war. All the communal libraries and many other public institutions in both countries were closed, and a large number of public officials were thrown out of employment.

SEVENTH ANNUAL DINNER.

The Seventh Annual Dinner of the L.A.A. took place at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, E.C., on November 23rd, at 7 p.m., when there was a fair attendance of members and friends, among the latter: Mr. H. D. Roberts, of Southwark; Mr. C. T. Davis, of Wandsworth; Mr. R. A. Peddie, the first Chairman of the L.A.A.; and Mr. W. W. Fortune, first

Secretary. Mr. F. M. Roberts occupied the chair. The Chairman of the Association, Mr. W. G. Chambers, was unfortunately absent through illness, and Messrs. Thorne, McDouall, and others sent apologies for non-attendance.

After an excellent dinner, toasts were called, with musical items interspersed. The musical programme was especially good, consisting of songs, comic and serious, by Messrs. Atkinson, Gamgee, Hawkins, Pennington, Steed and Wise. Mr. Douglas H. Young presided at the piano. Without pretending to give a complete account of the toasts we may sub-join the following *precis*, as a few points were raised of interest to those who had the misfortune to be absent.

The King: By Mr. F. M. Roberts, with musical honours.

Our Provincial Colleagues: This was proposed by Mr. Sayers in the regretted absence of Mr. Chambers. He remarked that the Association existed largely for the stimulation of professional interest in country members and mentioned one or two ways in which we could increase that stimulus, particularly by improving the journal; he thought the country members were more optimistic than those of London, and that a great deal of nonsense was talked about the low status of the profession.

In an effective and pleasantly satirical reply Mr. Coltman touched upon the work of the study circle, the weak point of which he declared was that assistants sat in judgment on the work of assistants. The proficiency test scheme was not open to that objection. He thought that not half enough was done for provincial members, believing with Mr. Sayers that the journal was the medium of good, and we ought to have more of it. He did not wonder at the secession of the Northern Branch, he applauded it; and closed his speech with a view of a future all-embracing association which should hold its annual meetings in London.

The Library Association: In introducing this Mr. Rees said that the position of librarianship as a profession was largely due to the work of the L.A.—the days of old postmen and retired Committee-men as librarians were practically over, although we did occasionally hear of them. The L.A. had created public opinion on this point. Perhaps the Association was not doing enough for us, but they had done much and were beginning to see that the L.A.A. was worth consideration: he instanced the correspondence classes as the outcome of the policy of the L.A.A. towards the greater Association.

Mr. H. D. Roberts replied. The L.A., he said, had the interests of the Assistants at heart possibly more than the assistants themselves. He said that the present education policy of the L.A. was largely the result of a scheme of Correspondence Classes suggested to the Committee by Messrs. Rees and Wood, acting as representatives of the L.A.A. He touched upon the possibility of the amalgamation of the L.A.A. with the L.A. as a junior branch. He could say, too, without breach of confidence, that he believed the L.A.A. would shortly be invited to send representatives to a Sub-committee of the L.A. to discuss matters from which he believed great advantages would accrue.

The Library Assistants' Association: Mr. C. T. Davis introduced this in a characteristic speech. He dwelt upon the changed conditions of library assistants as regards hours, wages, etc., since the time of his own assistantship. He said there were two classes of assistants in London and

elsewhere, mere attendants who did not deserve to rise in their profession, and vigorous assistants who had the welfare of the library service at heart. The L.A.A. existed to create more of the latter, and there was plenty of room at the top for really good men.

Mr. Hatcher, in replying, agreed with Mr. Davis on the improvements in hours; but although he himself had no reason to complain, he thought there was still room for further improvement. To compel an assistant to work from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., with an hour and a half for dinner and the same for tea, was practically compelling him to work eleven or twelve hours daily, as the intervals were not long enough for anything but meals and getting to and from the library.

The Visitors: In introducing this toast, Mr. Sayers thought it must be as great a pleasure to Mr. Peddie and Mr. Fortune, the first chairman and secretary respectively, to be present at the seventh annual dinner of the L.A.A. as it was to us to welcome them. Much of the success of the Association was due to their efforts, and we owed them gratitude. Then he thanked Mr. Roberts for the excellent work he had done for assistants as hon. secretary of the Education Committee of the L.A.; he had sat at Mr. Roberts' feet that very afternoon and could thank him personally. Mr. Davis, too, had shown his sympathy and interest on many occasions.

Mr. Peddie, in responding, said that the L.A.A. had done as much for the L.A. as the L.A. had for the L.A.A. The junior association had quickened the pace considerably, and for its continued success our Association needed more such men as Mr. B. L. Dyer, men who knew what they wanted and strove for it irrespective of persons. He gave a picture of his proceedings with the Library Association in the early days of the L.A.A., and in conclusion looked forward to a time when the profession should be represented by one thoroughly organised association, not of persons "interested" in library work, but of practical men as were the architects' and engineers' associations.

The remaining toasts were *the President*, which was proposed in well-chosen words by Mr. G. E. Roebuck, to which Mr. F. Meaden Roberts responded felicitously, and the *Artistes*. Then a thoroughly enjoyable evening was brought to close by the company joining hands and singing with great humour and enthusiasm, "Auld Lang Syne."

THE DISPLAY AND FILING OF PERIODICALS.

By F. J. P. BURGoyNE, Battersea Public Libraries.

A really effective system of displaying periodicals in a public library reading room is almost as difficult to find as a first folio Shakespeare on a London bookstall. The reason why there are so many failures in this respect is not difficult to surmise. Partly due, in the first place, to the inadequate provision of space almost invariably allowed in reading rooms for the proper display of periodicals, the evil is often aggravated in a marked degree by the apathy displayed by a large number of librarians, who devote as little time as possible to this branch of library economy, apparently forgetting that the newsroom is with a great majority of the public the most popular part of a library building. That all librarians are conversant with such things as guides to readers, and the selection of magazines, I fain would believe. Surely, then, there can be no excuse

for those who prefer the old plan of mixing periodicals in one miscellaneous assortment upon the reading room tables, and leaving to the unfortunate reader the work of unearthing as best he may the particular magazine he desires. Why this mixture still continues, even in libraries noted for being in the advanced-guard of library progress, one is at a loss to understand, but doubtless the time is not far distant when this "go-as-you-please" method of dealing with the public will give way to a more modern and business-like administration in this department of library work.

Though the value of an efficient display of periodicals will be greatly enhanced if the room in which they are exhibited is planned, as regards size, light, &c., to suit modern requirements, much good can be done in existing rooms if attention is given to readers' guides, and to a judicious selection of periodicals.

The selection of periodicals should be made with a view of satisfying the demands of the district which the library serves, and only the best journals on a specific subject should be obtained. For instance, the library at Battersea, which is situated in a working class neighbourhood, will by reason of its situation, provide for a larger number of journals dealing with trade subjects than would be necessary in such districts as Hampstead, where the greater part of the readers belong to the upper middle class.

It is sometimes a difficult matter to decide which is the best journal on a specific subject; but where the funds are limited and there are several branches to maintain, it is possible to display a variety of periodicals dealing with the same subject at little or no additional cost, if the selection is spread over each branch so that the supply of periodicals at the libraries will supplement each other. Daily newspapers representing all political parties, and papers of local interest, should of course be found in every public library newsroom, and if the funds allow, dailies from the provinces can with advantage be also obtained. Presented periodicals, especially those which air the views of faddist societies, should be received with caution, and ought never to be placed upon reading room tables unless the librarian is sure that there is a demand for them.

Whenever possible, the newspapers and periodicals of the light and scrappy order should be separated from the more sober weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies. This plan will require the provision of at least two reading rooms for the display of the periodicals, but the extra space required is amply compensated for by the fact that a larger number of periodicals can generally be accommodated, and that comparative comfort and quietness can be given the magazine reader.

(To be continued).

THE COMMITTEE.

The fourth meeting was held on November 16th, and in the absence of Mr. Chambers, through illness, the chair was taken by Mr. Hatcher. Messrs. Bullen, Coltman, Green, Hatcher, Poulter, Rivers, Roebuck, Sayers, and Sureties were present.

The Standing Orders were reviewed, and other formal matters attended to.

Two new members were enrolled.

PROFICIENCY TESTS.

Mr. Doubleday's question: "Give some account of the chief changes effected during the eighteenth century in the character of English literature, in prose and verse."

Mr. Guppy's question: "From the earliest times there have been books conveying information just as effectively as our volumes of printed sheets, but they have not always been of the shape or material so familiar to us at the commencement of the twentieth century."

Demonstrate this statement by describing as briefly as is consistent with clearness, the various methods that have been employed from the earliest times to the close of the fifteenth century to record knowledge, and to transmit it from one generation to another. State your ideas as to the real purpose of books (beyond the mere recording and transmitting of knowledge), show the transition from one method to another, and endeavour to give the reason for each change of method.

In adjudicating upon the essays submitted, style and neatness will be taken into consideration.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES.

Fill in pseudonym and age; secure the signature of a witness; and *attach the form to your essay.* Send to

Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers,
Central Public Library,
Town Hall,
CROYDON,

to reach him three days after you receive the Test in the December LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

You are trusted faithfully to observe the conditions of the Test as given in the December, 1904, LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Accrington.—Mr. Carnegie has offered £7,500 for a Public Library, which has been accepted. The Town Council have resolved to adopt the Library Acts and levy the maximum rate.

Barry.—Mr. Edwin W. M. Corbett, surveyor, Cardiff, sat as arbitrator to hear evidence in the dispute between the Barry Urban District Council and Public Libraries Committee on the one hand, and Mr. Watkin Williams, builder, on the other, as to alleged faulty construction of the foundations of the Carnegie Public Library buildings at Barry Dock. Mr. C. E. Hutchinson, London, one of the architects, was examined at considerable length to show that, in most instances, the concrete foundations of the building were laid on loose made earth, and not sunk to rock bottom. The building, so far as it had proceeded, was about a foot out of square, and this disfigurement and the structural defects in the foundations were, in his opinion, sufficient justification for calling upon the contractor to take the present building down, carry out the foundations as specified, and re-erect the structure.

Eccles.—The Council have unanimously accepted Mr. Carnegie's offer of £7,500 for a Public Library on the usual conditions.

Hartlepool.—The new Public Library, for which Mr. Carnegie made a grant of £5,000, has recently been opened. This is a handsome structure of red brick with carved stone work. The lending library is 52 feet by 20

feet and provides shelving room for 24,000 volumes. It is fitted with Chiver's indicator for 4,000 numbers, and also a Cotgreave indicator for 5,000 numbers, leaving ample room for extension. There is a ladies' room to seat 24 persons. The news room, on the right of the hall, is 59 feet by 25 feet, with stands for 30 newspapers and tables to seat 36 readers. On the upper floor is the reference library and committee room. The wood work is of pitch pine, and the building is lighted throughout by electricity.

Lambeth (Herne Hill).—The Libraries committee of the Borough Council have reported that Mr. Carnegie has agreed to the plans of the new library at Herne Hill.

Leyland.—It was announced at the meeting of the Urban District Council the other day that Mr. Carnegie had, on the usual conditions, offered £1,800 to erect a public library at Leyland.

St. Helens.—The Town Council last week accepted tenders for the erection of two branch libraries for the districts of Newtown and Sutton, for which Mr. Carnegie will contribute £6,000. Sites have been given by Sir David Gamble and Messrs. Greenall, Whitley & Co.

We regret that, owing to a printer's error in our last issue, which escaped us, the "Newcastle Daily Chronicle" was made responsible for some rather silly remarks on Public Libraries; the article in question appeared in another Novocastrian Journal altogether. We are indebted to Mr. Lange of St. Bride Institute for pointing out the mistake.

NEW MEMBERS.

Senior.—Mr. B. E. Sumner, Librarian-in-Charge, Kilburn Branch Library, Hampstead.

Junior.—Mr. J. W. Crossby, Public Library, Canning Town.

APPOINTMENTS.

***MOSLIN**, Mr. A. M., Second Assistant, Limehouse, to be First Assistant, St. George, Stepney.

***LONEY**, Mr. R. H., Third Assistant, Whitechapel, to be Second Assistant, Limehouse, Stepney.

HIGGS, Mr. R., Junior, Limehouse, to be Third Assistant, Whitechapel, Stepney.

*Member of the L.A.A.

ADDRESSES.

Chairman and Hon. Treasurer—Mr. W. G. Chambers, Public Library, Plumstead.

Hon. Secretary—Mr. Geo. E. Roebuck, St. George's Library, 236 Cable Street, E.

Hon. Secretary Education Sub-Committee—Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers, Public Library, Croydon.

Hon. Librarian—Mr. A. H. Carter, Public Library, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.